



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHAIRMAN FLOYD D. SPENCE

OPENING STATEMENT ON MARK-UP OF DOE LEGISLATION

The committee meets this afternoon to consider a range of bills dealing with the Department of Energy. Let me from the outset recognize the concerns that have been raised over the short notice associated with today's mark-up. I also share the concern, as I would have liked to provide all members with more time to consider the various bills before us. However, as I will shortly outline, we find ourselves in this situation due to the very short referral period we received on some of the bills on sequential referral from the Commerce Committee. Rather than allow our referral to lapse without taking action, I felt it was prudent to proceed with consideration of these bills that address critical and important issues within our jurisdiction over the Department of Energy. Further, the severity of the issues surrounding the ongoing investigation into the missing computer drives at the Los Alamos National Laboratory similarly compels us to take early action and we will consider two bills directly addressing this matter.

Given the expedited mark-up schedule, we have made every effort to work these bills in a bipartisan fashion and will offer substitute amendments in each instance which have been agreed to by both Mr. Skelton and myself as well as most other interested members. I appreciate the cooperation of all members involved in this effort and with everyone's help believe we can through today's business in a timely and reasonable fashion.

That said, the order of business for today will be as follows.

First, we will consider H. Res. 534, a resolution sponsored by myself, Mr. Skelton, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Sisisky, Mr. Weldon, Mr. Thornberry and Mrs. Tauscher expressing the Sense of the House on the incident at the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Then we will take up three bills we have received on sequential referral from the Commerce Committee, all of which address management of the Department of Energy nuclear complex and the new National Nuclear Security Administration.

H.R. 3906, a bill to codify the authority of the Secretary of Energy to conduct independent assessments of safeguards and security at all DOE facilities, including facilities of the NNSA;

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H.R. 4446, a bill to permit the Secretary of Energy to assess civil penalties resulting from Price Andersen Act safety violations against NNSA contractors through the Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environment, Safety and Health, instead of through the NNSA Administrator as currently required by title 32 of the FY 2000 National Defense Authorization Act;

H.R. 3383, a bill to eliminate the existing statutory exemption for certain NNSA and DOE contractors from Price Anderson civil penalties.

Finally, we will consider H.R. 4737, a bill introduced by Mr. Hunter to improve security procedures at the NNSA national security laboratories.

As I said at the outset, this is a full schedule and I urge all members to stay close to the proceedings as we may have record votes at any point during the mark-up.

Copies of all these bills as well as the proposed committee substitute amendments were distributed to all committee members yesterday and are also before each member this afternoon.

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